

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the claims on file with the following claims:

1-40. (cancelled)

41. (new) A method of aggregating a plurality of virtual connections into a single virtual connection, comprising:

serially selecting at least two sets of virtual connections, the first set being a non-empty proper subset of the plurality of virtual connections, each other set being a non-empty proper subset of the preceding set, and the last set having exactly one of the plurality of virtual connections; and

applying a shaper to traffic from the virtual connection of the last set to determine in the time domain when the traffic is to be transmitted over the single virtual connection in accordance with at least one traffic descriptor associated with the single virtual connection.

42. (new) The method of claim 41 wherein the plurality of virtual connections are a plurality of virtual channel connections and the single virtual connection is a virtual path connection.

43. (new) A device for aggregating a plurality of virtual connections into a single virtual connection, comprising:

a first set of at least one arbitrator, the first set of at least one arbitrator selecting a non-empty proper subset of virtual connections from among the plurality of virtual connections;

at least one additional set of at least one arbitrator, each additional set operating in series following the first set, each additional set selecting a non-empty proper subset of virtual connections from among the virtual connections of the preceding set, and the last set selecting exactly one virtual connection; and

a shaper to determine in the time domain when the traffic from the one virtual connection selected by the last set of at least one arbitrator is to be transmitted over the single virtual connection in accordance with at least one traffic descriptor associated with the single virtual connection.

44. (new) The device of claim 43 wherein the plurality of virtual connections are a plurality of virtual channel connections and the single virtual connection is a virtual path connection.